

Tips to Facilitate Bb Collaborate Sessions

Throughout the process:

#1 tip – Be patient. Give yourself plenty of time PRIOR to the start of the session to set up (approx. 30 minutes). It is possible that there are several updates to install, files to download, materials to prepare and/or the need to re-start your computer.

Sources for Help:

[Bb Collaborate Support Portal](#)

[Bb Collaborate Help Desk](#) OR 1 (877) 382-2293

USF IT 1.866.974.1222 OR help@usf.edu

On the computer you will be accessing the session on:

Recommended Browser: Firefox, download here: <http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/>

Ensure you have the most recent version of JAVA – check here: <https://www.java.com/verify>

If you are using a MAC, download the Bb Collaborate Launcher App: (1 time only)

<https://na-downloads.illuminate.com/bcl/BlackboardCollaborateLauncher>

BEFORE term starts:

1. List the fact that synchronous meetings will be required in OASIS (if applicable)
- 2a. State when the Bb Collaborate sessions (days/times) will be held in the syllabus
- OR
- b. State that a survey among students will determine Illuminate – dates/times (most popular days/times rule)
- OR
- c. Have multiple, repeat sessions available as options to students (more work for instructor)
3. Announce and emphasize the option you selected (2a, b or c) – prior to start of class (first announcement, email)
4. In syllabus, under “Required Materials” - let students know that if they do not have built in microphone/speakers, they will need to purchase a headset for \$20.00 or much less. Check tigerdirect.com

Beginning of term:

4. Create a quiz – students certify that they understand the Illuminate policy (among other syllabus items) by scoring 100% on the quiz (repeated attempts allowed)

5. Schedule the actual days/times as soon as humanly possible (within first 3 weeks of course) either as stated above - decided by instructor and communicated to students or conduct a survey of most popular days/times

6. Bb Collaborate Orientation – CRITICAL. Make the first synchronous session low-stakes, within first 3 weeks of the term, no content is covered, only how to get connected, use the interface. Must be mandatory assignment, evaluation – related (worth some points toward grade)

Rationale:

If students have problems connecting at this point, they can troubleshoot BEFORE an official session.

If students are anxious, they can relieve some anxiety by using the interface without having to also learn new content (not so cognitively taxing)

7. Develop a torturous make-up assignment that no student would ever want to do – prominently display this make-up assignment in the syllabus and in an announcement, ensuring that students see it and absolutely, under no circumstances, want to miss a session and suffer the consequences of such an awful fate.

8. Consider recruiting a technical assistant – someone whose role during the session is to troubleshoot technical issues (just ask your students – one is bound to be an “expert”)

PRACTICE! PRACTICE! PRACTICE!

As an instructor, you need to know how to use the interface as a student (to aid in technical assistance) and as an instructor. Several “contact” hours with Bb Collaborate tutorials are necessary, prior to teaching any content:

<http://www.blackboard.com/Platforms/Collaborate/Services/On-Demand-Learning-Center/Web-Conferencing.aspx>

scroll down to “FOR MODERATORS”

Limit the first session to 1 hour or less – the first 15-30 minutes just for logging on (successfully), testing audio and looking at each other via web cam.

WHILE in a Bb Collaborate Session – TIPS:

Gather, prepare and upload instructional materials well in advance of the official session start time.

Press the “record” button to record the session for review or for someone who missed the session (if you have not selected “automatic” for recordings)

Students are intrigued by the Bb Collaborate interface – especially the first time, they want to “fiddle” around with all the tools. Allow 5 minutes for exploring so they can, “get it out of their system”. After this designated 5 minutes for discovery and satisfying curiosity:

1. Limit text chat – it can be distracting for students and instructor – especially when it gets off topic

2. Limit perpetual web-cam use, intense drain on band-width, causes some students to get kicked out
3. Limit doodling on the whiteboard – also distracting

Generally allow only one person to talk at a time – otherwise the virtual classroom just gets “noisy”

The “talk” button works like a walkie-talkie. Click to talk, unclick to stop and give the talk button to someone else.

Avoid “break-out” rooms the first session, they are more involved and require extra preparation and set-up prior to official session

End and dismiss the session according to the planned schedule – you know how students do not like to be kept even one minute “after class”

AFTER the session:

Follow-up with students that either didn't/couldn't log in or got kicked out, try to mitigate the negative experience by exuding sympathy and opportunities to review the recorded session. Encourage the student to seek Bb Collaborate support BEFORE the next session.